initiated by the scientific community. However, due to its economical, environmental and health importance, government employees, science administrators and lawyers took control of regulatory issues and scientists had to take a back seat. Different anti-globalist organizations, non-governmental organizations, and "green" movements are outspoken opponents of biotechnology. In addition, the tabloids often express extreme views on biotechnology, especially on "green" biotechnology. This resulted on a moratorium being placed in some countries for genetically modified crop production. The major driving force behind this narrow-minded activity is fueled by hysteria in the media. This is why this particular book is excellent. It is edited by Iain Taylor, who selected the best contributors for each Chapter and covers all the controversial aspects with regard to regulation and policy. Starting with the birth of biotechnology it deals with the controversy concerning terminology and novelty. It covers transgenic crops by putting into context their function in agro-ecosystems, including potential risks associated with their introduction into the environment. One of the Chapters is devoted to human health implications surrounding genetically engineered foods while other Chapters include future research agendas. The second part of the book deals with precautionary measures and covers concepts which have been adopted in the Cartagena protocol. These were later arbitrarily changed to a precautionary principle in recent EU directives. This lead to difficulty in harmonizing the different regulations internationally. The following Chapters summarize both the North American regulations and the European Union policy on biotechnology. From these the reader can identify the main philosophical differences between the two regulatory systems. The following two Chapters cover South African and Brazilian regulatory procedures and provides good examples covering regulatory regimes in developed countries. However, they omit an overview on how the Asian countries regulate the use of GE organisms where large scale field releases are on-going, for instance in China and India. A Chapter is devoted to a description of public involvement on decision making and the book ends with a fascinating topic about misunderstandings in science and how the public misinterpret the use of GE crops.

The book is well edited; the selection of topics underline the subtitle of the book, interim policies and confusing legislation. Both areas are highly pertinent and cover the controversies that exist on GMOs. The book is an excellent overview of the GMO controversy and I strongly recommend it to all who are interested in the introduction of the new technology. It would provide beneficial reading for journalists who are involved in writing articles on the GM controversy. In so doing they can avoid misleading the public.

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Handbook of Seed Science and Technology, Amarjit S. Basra (Ed.), 2006, Food Products Press®, An Imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580, Price: US $94.95, Soft Cover, 795 pages, ISBN 1-56022-315-4, Website: www.haworthpress.com

Seed science is a foundational aspect of the study of plant biology, and this book presents an integrated perspective of recent applications of seed science and technology. Covering all the major topics of seed science, it comprises 26 chapters by seed scientists from around the world and is organised into four sections: (1) seed developmental biology and biotechnology; (2) seed dormancy and germination; (3) seed ecology; and (4) seed technology.

The first section covers basic research related to seed development and provides a substantial overview of several topics. These include, for example, the molecular control of ovule development, nutritive value enhancement of seeds by genetic engineering and synthetic seed technology. In the second section, the main aspects of seed dormancy and germination are reviewed in three chapters by leaders in the field. Important basic aspects of dormancy and germination are covered, as well as hormonal interactions during dormancy release and germination and the role of photoregulation of seed germination. The third section on seed ecology provides both basic and applied information and covers a variety of relevant topics such as pollination and seed set, seed size, seed predation, and soil seed banks. Various aspects of seed technology are discussed in the fourth section of the book. This balances the fundamental aspects of seed physiology, as presented in the other section, with the more "hands-on" approach of seed technology. The information given here would be of particular interest to those involved in the seed testing and regulating industry. Topics such as seed quality testing, seed vigour assessment, seedborne pathogens, hybrid seed production and the role of seed technology in plant germplasm conservation are discussed.

Overall, the book focuses on the underlying mechanisms of seed biology and the impact of biotechnology on world hunger, malnutrition and consumer preferences. Each chapter contains a full reference list and points out likely directions for future developments. This publication contains an interesting mix of information on seed science and would be of value to researchers, teachers and students and professionals in the areas of seed biology and technology.

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